DOMINOE GAME CENTER PIECE

TECHNICAL FIELD

The invention relates to games, and, more particularly, the invention relates to dominoes.

STATEMENT OF A PROBLEM ADDRESSED BY THIS INVENTION

Interpretation Considerations

This section describes the technical field in more detail, and discusses problems encountered in the technical field. This section does not describe prior art as defined for purposes of anticipation or obviousness under 35 U.S.C. section 102 or 35 U.S.C. section 103. Thus, nothing stated in the Statement of a Problem Addressed by This Invention is to be construed as prior art

Discussion

Dominoes are a favorite past-time of children, adults, and seniors alike. There are many different ways to play dominoes; each having a unique game, each having a unique set of rules. Domino games include 42, Bergen, Castle Rock Solitaire, the Chicken Foot Game, Basic Train, and Mexican Train, for example.

Some games, such as Mexican Train, for example, require a game center piece and markers to assist players to keep track of game rules. Unfortunately at items, markers are not available. More importantly, a marker may be misplaced or incorrectly placed on the game center piece during a game. Accordingly, when a marker is misplaced players may argue. Arguments distract from a pleasurable gaming experience and may lead early termination of a game.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Various aspects of the invention, as well as at least one embodiment, are better understood by reference to the following **EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENT OF A BEST MODE**. To better understand the invention, the **EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENT OF A BEST MODE** should be read in conjunction with the drawings in which:

Figure 1 illustrates a game center piece for organizing dominoes;

Figure illustrates one embodiment of a game center piece signaling means indicator;

Figure 3 illustrates an alternative embodiment of a game center piece signaling means indicator;

Figure 4 illustrates an electrically enabled signaling means of a game center piece for organizing dominoes; and

Figure 5 illustrates a sound enabled game center piece for organizing dominoes.

AN EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENT OF A BEST MODE

Interpretation Considerations

When reading this section (An Exemplary Embodiment of a Best Mode, which describes an exemplary embodiment of the best mode of the invention, hereinafter "exemplary embodiment"), one should keep in mind several points. First, the following exemplary embodiment is what the inventor believes to be the best mode for practicing the invention at the time this patent was filed. Thus, since one of ordinary skill in the art may recognize from the following exemplary embodiment that substantially equivalent structures or substantially equivalent acts may be used to achieve the same results in exactly the same way, or to achieve the same results in a not dissimilar way, the following exemplary embodiment should not be interpreted as limiting the invention to one embodiment.

Likewise, individual aspects (sometimes called species) of the invention are provided as examples, and, accordingly, one of ordinary skill in the art may recognize from a following exemplary structure (or a following exemplary act) that a substantially equivalent structure or substantially equivalent act may be used to either achieve the same results in substantially the same way, or to achieve the same results in a not dissimilar way.

Accordingly, the discussion of a species (or a specific item) invokes the genus (the class of items) to which that species belongs as well as related species in that genus. Likewise, the recitation of a genus invokes the species known in the art. Furthermore, it is recognized that as technology develops, a number of additional alternatives to achieve an aspect of the invention may arise. Such advances are hereby incorporated within their respective genus, and should be recognized as being functionally equivalent or structurally equivalent to the aspect shown or described.

Second, the only essential aspects of the invention are identified by the claims. Thus, aspects of the invention, including elements, acts, functions, and relationships (shown or described) should not be interpreted as being essential unless they are explicitly described and identified as being essential. Third, a function or an act should be interpreted as incorporating all modes of doing that function or act, unless otherwise explicitly stated (for example, one recognizes that "tacking" may be done by nailing, stapling, gluing, hot gunning, riveting, etc., and so a use of the word tacking invokes stapling, gluing, etc., and all other modes of that word and similar words, such as "attaching"). Fourth, unless explicitly stated otherwise, conjunctive words (such as "or", "and", "including", or "comprising" for example) should be interpreted in the inclusive, not the exclusive, sense. Fifth, the words "means" and "step" are provided to facilitate

the reader's understanding of the invention and do not mean "means" or "step" as defined in §112, paragraph 6 of 35 U.S.C., unless used as "means for –functioning–" or "step for –functioning–" in the **Claims** section.

Discussion of the Figures

The invention can be characterized as a game center piece for organizing dominoes and assisting players with keeping track of rules for a different domino games. The invention provides markers for players to keep track of rules using a signaling means such as a mechanical or electrical switch, for example. In a preferred embodiment, the game center piece is a hub wherein at least one signaling means is coupled to a top portion of the hub generally adjacent to an outer port enabled to dock a domino. In addition, the signaling means is a push button with a light emitting diode therein. Furthermore, in one embodiment the signaling means may comprise a play (lighted light emitting diode), and a no play position (non-lighted emitting diode).

Features and advantages of the invention can be better understood by reviewing Figure 1, which illustrates a game center piece for organizing dominoes 100. The game center piece 100 comprises a hub 110 having a top 112, a bottom 114, a side 116, a center port 120 enabled to encompass a domino 130, a plurality of outer ports, each outer port 140 enabled to dock a domino 130 portion, and a

signaling means 150 having at least a play and a no play position located on the top 112 of the hub 110 generally adjacent to an outer port 140.

The hub 110 may comprise any material such as plastic, laminate, wood, or metal, for example. In addition, the hub 110 may be any color, such as blue, black, or red for example. Furthermore, the hub 110 may have alphanumeric characters, symbols, or shapes silk screened or molded within the top 112, bottom 114, or side 116 such as a train, a stop sign, or a word, for example. Preferably, the hub 110 is generally octagonal in shape. In an alternative embodiment, the hub 110 may be generally rectangular, square, triangular, or rhomboid in shape, or representative of an object such as a train, a domino, or animal, for example

The center port 120 is enabled to accommodate a domino 130 that is centrally located in the hub 110. In a preferred embodiment, the center port 120 is an indention in the top 112 of the hub 110 wherein a domino 130 may be seated. In an alternative embodiment, the center port 120 is an orifice that extends from the top 112 of the hub 110 to the bottom of the hub 114, wherein a domino 130 will rest on a surface 122. Of course, a center port 120 may generally rectangular, circular, or triangular in shape, such that a domino is accommodated therein.

Each outer port 140 is enabled to "dock" a portion of one domino 130 and is located along the perimeter of the hub 110. Preferably, each outer port 140 has three side 116 surfaces that join mechanically while in space (dock) with a domino 130 portion. In an alternative embodiment, each outer port 130 may have a clip or bracket, for example, to removably attach a domino portion to the hub 110. In yet an alternative, embodiment, each outer port 140 may have a magnet that removably attaches a portion of a domino 130 to its perimeter. Of course it is apparent to those skilled in the art that an outer port 140 may be any shaped or size such that a portion of a domino 130 is accommodated. In addition, the hub 110 may have a plurality of outer ports 140 along its perimeter. In a preferred embodiment, the perimeter of the hub 110 comprises 8 outer ports 140.

The signaling means 150 comprises at least a play signaling means and a no play signaling means and is preferably located on the top 112 of the hub 110 generally near to an outer port 140. The signaling means 150 is enabled to designate at least a play position 152 and a no play position 154. Signaling means may include, but are not limited to, an indicator, a mechanical slide switch, a mechanical rotary switch, a mechanical toggle switch, a mechanical push button switch, and a mechanical rocker switch, for example. In a preferred embodiment, the signaling means 150 is an indicator wherein the play position 152 is designated by a green color and the no play position 154 is designated by a red

color or vice-versa. In an alternative embodiment, the signaling means 150 is a slide switch wherein the play position 152 is designated by a train symbol the no play position 154 is designated by a stop sign sticker.

Figure 2 illustrates one embodiment of a game center piece signaling means 200. The signaling means 200 comprises a play member 210 having a bottom portion 212 and a no play member 220 having a bottom portion 222. In addition, the signaling means further comprises a coupling means 230 having an arm 232 extending horizontally from each end of the coupling means 230. The coupling means 230 couples the play bottom portion 212 to the no play bottom portion 222. Furthermore, the top of the hub 240 is adapted to attach to each arm via a hub fastening means 242.

Figure 3 illustrates an alternative embodiment of a game center piece signaling means 300. The signaling means 300 is generally cylindrical and comprises a play member 310 having a bottom portion 312, a no play member 320 having a bottom portion 322, a coupling means 330 having an arm 332 extending horizontally from each end of the coupling means 330, and the coupling means 330 coupling the play bottom portion 312 to the no play bottom portion 322, and the top of the hub 340 adapted to attach to each arm via a hub fastening means 342.

Figure 4 illustrates an electrically enabled embodiment of a game center piece 400 for organizing dominoes having a signaling means 450 and at least one battery 460. In a preferred embodiment, the signaling means 450 is an electrical push button light emitting diode switch having a lighted on position, or play position, and a non-lighted off position, or no play position. In addition, the light emitting diode may be a single colored diode such as white, red, blue, or green, for example. Furthermore, the push button light emitting diode is powered in the on position by at least one battery 460 having an on and off switch means. A battery 460 may include any alkaline, a nickel metal hydride, or lithium ion battery, for example.

In an alternative embodiment, the signaling means 450 may be an electrical push button two colored, green and red respectively, light emitting diode switch wherein the first position lighting first said color (play position) and the second position lighting second said color (no play position). In yet another embodiment, the signaling means 450 may be an electrical rocker switch enabled to turn a first single colored light emitting diode on (play position) and a second single colored light emitting diode off simultaneously (no play position) wherein the first single colored light is green and the second single colored light is red.

Figure 5 illustrates a sound enabled game center piece for organizing dominoes 500 having a battery 560, a speaker 570, and at least one sound means 580. In a preferred embodiment, the signaling means 350 is an electrical white push button light emitting diode switch having a lighted on position, or play position and a non-lighted off position or no play position. Furthermore, the sound means 380 is plays through the speaker 370 when the electrical signaling means 350 is switched to the lighted on position or play position. The sound means 380 may be a pre-recorded sound such as train whistle, train engine, or chime, for example. The sound means 380 may play repeatedly until the signaling means 350 is switched to the non-lighted off position, or may play for a pre-defined period of time. Of course, wiring is well known in the electrical arts, and so power delivery to the various elements in Figure 5 are omitted to prevent cluttering the drawing.

It is evident to those skilled in the art that a game center piece may comprise more than one single type of signaling means aligned adjacent to an outer port 440. In addition, is also evident that a combination of different signaling means may be used to differentiate a play position from a no play position. Furthermore, different sounds means may include sounds from animals, machines, or a human or simulated voice.